

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 1: The God Who Reveals Himself

Unit 1 Big Question and Answer:
How Can I Know What God Is Like?
He Shows Me What He's Like!

PFI NIV Songs 1, Tracks 3,4

Unit 1 Bible Verse: Amos 4:13, NIV 1984

"The LORD reveals His thoughts to man."

PFI NIV Songs 1, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 2:
God's Creations Tell Us about Him

Creations tell you something about the person who created them. God is the creator of our world and His creations tell us about Him. God's creations show us many things about Him. They show us that He is mighty, glorious, beautiful, good, wise, infinite, perfect and so much more. God loves for us to learn about Him from His creations and praise Him for what He's like.

BIBLE VERSE

How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!

Bible Truth 2 Bible Verse: Psalm 19:1-4

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

CASE STORY

Acts 14:8-23

Our story is:

The Case of the Mysterious Messengers.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who were the Mysterious Messengers? Who did the people of Lystra think they were?
2. What was the message they brought? How did they tell the people of Lystra that they could know it was true?

This story takes place in New Testament times, not many years after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. It takes place in the city of Lystra, Turkey.

The people of Lystra looked at the beauties of the countryside around them and were believers. They looked up at the glorious skies, over to the mountains and off to roaring, foamy sea, and they believed. They were enjoyed the rain that gave them good water to drink and grew the crops in their fields, and they believed. They enjoyed their children and each other and so many other good things that filled their hearts with joy...and they believed that only a god could have made all these things.

Well, they didn't really believe **A** god made all these things, but many gods. They didn't know the Lord. They gave their worship to other gods: the fake gods—or idols-- of the Greek people. So they praised Aphrodite for the love they knew in their hearts. They praised Poseidon for the seas; for the earth. And most of all, they praised Zeus for giving them the skies, the rain and the crops of food they enjoyed.

And oh, how they worshiped Zeus! What would they do without his blessing of rain and crops? They built a huge temple to him right outside the city and hired priests to make sacrifices of bulls to him. Many even believed an old tale that Zeus and his messenger, Hermes, had once come to earth as poor strangers seeking a place to stay. All but one, elderly couple refused them help. It was said that Zeus greatly blessed the couple for their kindness.

The people of Lystra knew this story and wondered: "What if Zeus and Hermes came to Lystra? Would they treat the gods with honor? Would the gods bless them, if they did?"

But Zeus and Hermes would never come to Lystra disguised as strangers, no matter how long the people might wait. Why? Because Zeus and Hermes were only

idols. No, these gods would never visit, but the Lord, the one, true Creator God had something wonderful planned for the people of Lystra. He wanted them to know Him. He wanted them to save them. He was sending His messengers Paul and Barnabas to them with His message of salvation.

Paul and Barnabas came to Lystra, dusty and tired from their 20-mile walk on the mountainous roads. At God's command, they had been traveling from town to town throughout Turkey, telling all who would listen about the true Creator God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Everywhere they went people came to hear their message. Many listened. Some believed. Others—especially the Jews—were very angry. Paul and Barnabas knew that all too well that anger usually turned into danger for them. They had just run from the cities of Iconium and Antioch where the Jews had tried to kill them! Now they had come to Lystra. What would the Lord have in store for them there?

Paul and Barnabas entered Lystra and began sharing the good news about Jesus. Soon a crowd gathered around them, eager to hear what these two strangers had to say about the true Creator God and His Son, Jesus Christ, whom they had never heard about before.

Among the listeners in the crowd was an old man who had been crippled from birth. Paul watched the man soak in the truth about Jesus. He could see that God had given him faith to believe and even be healed. Paul looked straight at the man and shouted to him: "Stand up on your feet!" The shocked crowd watched as the crippled man jumped to his feet and began to walk around!

"Who has ever heard of such a thing! This is an act of the gods!" one person gasped.

"These strangers must be Zeus and Hermes, come to visit us as humans, just like in the old story!" they exclaimed.

"The gods have come!" the word spread among the crowd.

"Quickly, go get the priest at Zeus' temple!" they exclaimed. "We must offer sacrifices to them! We want to be sure to treat them well!"

The priest was sent for. The crowd parted to let the priest of Zeus through, with wreaths to place upon Paul's and Barnabas' necks. They led fat bulls to them to be sacrificed in their honor.

Paul and Barnabas were horrified! The people didn't understand! They thought they were the gods, Zeus and

Hermes, from that old tale! Had the people not understood the message? It was in the name of Jesus, not Zeus or Hermes, that this man had been healed! They must make them understand.

Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes—as a sign that something was very wrong. They rushed into the crowd, shouting: "Stop! Don't do this! We are only humans, like you. We aren't gods! We've come to bring you good news of salvation through Jesus. Turn from the gods you worship. They are just worthless idols! Turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them."

"In the past, God let the peoples of the nations like you go their own way, worshiping their fake gods. Yet He hasn't left you without ways to know that He's the one, true God and show you what He's like. He has shown you kindness by giving you rain that waters your crops. He has provided you with lots of food and He fills your hearts with joy," Paul explained.

Even with this explanation, some of people of Lystra still wanted to treat them like gods and make sacrifices to them. But others wondered at these strange, new ideas. Could it be that Zeus and Hermes were only worthless idols? Could it be that the LORD was the true Creator God who had been revealing Himself to them in His creations around them and in their hearts? They wanted to hear more.

But before Paul could tell them more, some Jews who had tried to kill him in Iconium and Antioch joined the crowd. "These men speak lies!" they told the others. "Don't listen to them. They deserve death!"

Only a little while before this crowd had tried to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. Now the crowd turned on them. The Jews pelted Paul with rocks until he fell unconscious to the ground. They dragged him out of the city and left him for dead.

Barnabas and the new believers in Christ anxiously gathered around Paul when the Jews had left. Was he dead? No! He was only terribly hurt.

Paul and Barnabas spent the night in Lystra with the new believers, then left the next morning. Paul was bruised, sore, beat up—but happy as they headed to the city of Derbe. Why happy? Because they had been able to tell the people of Lystra about the Lord, the true Creator God and His Son, Jesus Christ and some had believed! Now there would be people in Lystra to tell others about the true

Creator God, who revealed Himself in the heavens and earth and sea and everything in it. Who gave rain to make their crops grow and put joy in their hearts-- and that made all the suffering worthwhile to Paul.

Our Bible Truth is: God's Creations Tell Us about Him

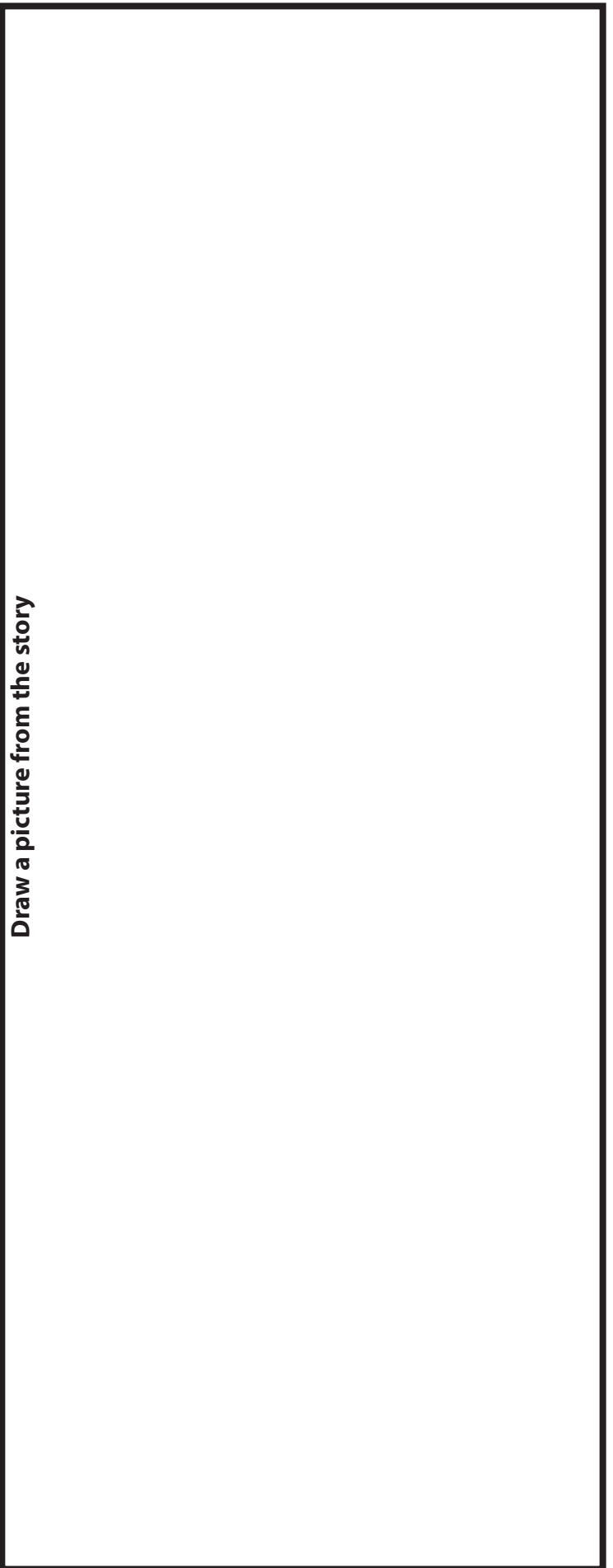
Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 19:1-4

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

The heavens do declare the glory of God. They, like all of God's creations, remind us that there is a one, true God who made them all, and who made us to know Him. But it wasn't enough for the people of Lystra to know God by looking at His creations. And it will never be enough for us today. We need to learn about Him in the Bible. We need to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Then, we can truly know Him.

Let's praise God for revealing Himself in His creation, but let's also pray that He would work in our hearts and the hearts of people everywhere, to turn from their sins and trust in Him as their Savior. Let's ask Him to even send out some of us one day, tell all these people who He really is and how they can be saved from their sins.

Draw a picture from the story



SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

God's creations show us that He is mighty, good and wise.

Answer: True.

2. Crack the Case Questions:

a. Who were the Mysterious Messengers? Who did the people of Lystra think they were?

Answer: Paul and Barnabas. The Greek gods, Zeus and Hermes.

b. What was the message they brought? How did they tell the people of Lystra that they could know it was true?

Answer: They brought the good news of the one, true, living God who offers them salvation through Jesus. They told the people of Lystra that they could see what this one, true God was like in how He had provided for them in creation.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

Psalm 19:1-4:

"The ___ declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they ___ knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Answers: heavens; displays; world.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

O, Worship the King

PFI NIV Songs 1, Track 9

Verse 3

Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air,
it shines in the light,
It streams from the hill,
It descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Words: Robert Grant Music: Attr. Johan Michael Haydn

All of God's creation tells us about Him. We can look at everything from the air to the light, to the hills and plains, to the dew and rain, and see that God cares for us.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication

A God, we praise You for being the one, true God and Creator of all things.

C God, we confess that many times we don't choose to love You or obey You, even though we know about You. We need Jesus to save us!

T God, we thank You sending Your people all over the world to tell others about Jesus. Thank You for sending people to tell us about Him!

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Send out Your people to tell others about Jesus, too! Help us all to know You better as we look at Your wonderful creations.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

The Heavens Declare

PFI NIV Songs 1, Track 10

The heavens declare the glory of God,
The sky proclaims the works of His hands
Day after day, they pour out speech,
Night after night, they display knowledge,
There is no language, where their voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out into all the earth.
The heavens declare the glory of God,
The sky proclaims the works of His hands
Psalm Nineteen: one through four.

Words: Psalm 19:1-4, NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2012

God loved His people long before they loved Him. He loved them and chose to adopt them as His people, even before He created (founded) the world. Why did He do this? Because it pleased Him to do it! It would show how wonderful He is and how great the good gifts He gives His people because of Jesus. We think of what He's done and we praise Him for being so good to people like us. People who are sinners, but through Jesus, are made to be holy--without sin and without blame in His sight.